

Past Tense

Past Perfect Continuous Tense

It is used to express a continued or ongoing action that started in the past and continued until sometime in past. There will be a time reference, such as “since 1990, for three hours. etc.” from which the action had started. Such time reference or sense of reference is the identity of perfect continuous tense.

Uses of past perfect continuous tense:

- It is used to show that something started in the past and continued up until another time in the past.

Examples.

They had been talking for over an hour before the chairman arrived.

She had been working at that ceremony for three years.

- Using the past perfect continuous before another action in the past is a good way to show cause and effect.

Examples.

Julia was tired because he had been jogging.

Sarah gained weight because he had been overeating.

Difference between past continuous and past perfect continuous

If you do not include duration such as “for five minutes, for two weeks, since Friday, etc.” many English speakers choose to use the past continuous rather than the past perfect continuous. Be careful because this can change the meaning of the sentence. Past continuous emphasizes interrupted actions, whereas past perfect continuous emphasizes duration of time before something in the past.

Examples.

He was tired because he was exercising so hard.

(This sentence emphasizes that he was tired because he was exercising at that exact moment.)

He was tired because he had been exercising so hard.

(This sentence emphasizes that he was tired because he had been exercising over a period of time. It is possible that he was still exercising at that moment or that he had just finished.)

Sentence Structure of Past Perfect Continuous Tense

Structure of Simple/Positive Sentence:

Subject + had been + (ing form of verb) + Object + time reference.

Note: 'Since' is used for point of time. (E.g. since Friday, since 1990, since 5 O'clock). 'For' is used for period of time or duration. (E.g. for two hours, for ten days, for five years).

Simple Sentences:

He had been playing in the hall for 1 hour.	She had been taking care of her health since 1990.
It had been Sleeping on the sofa for three hours.	I had been watching T.V. for two hours
We had been speaking good English for two years.	You had been telling a story for 4 hours.

Structure of negative Sentence:

Subject + had + not + been + (ing form of verb) + Object + time reference.

Note: 'Since' is used for point of time. (E.g. since Friday, since 1990, since 5 O'clock). 'For' is used for period of time or duration. (E.g. for two hours, for ten days, for five years).

Negative Sentences:

He had not been playing in the hall for 1 hour.	She had not been taking care of her health since 1990.
It had not been Sleeping on the sofa for three hours.	I had not been watching T.V. for two hours
We had not been speaking good English for two years.	You had not been telling a story for 4 hours.

Structure of interrogative Sentence:

Had + subject+ been + (ing form of verb) + Object + time reference.

Note: ‘Since’ is used for point of time. (E.g. since Friday, since 1990, since 5 O’clock). ‘For’ is used for period of time or duration. (E.g. for two hours, for ten days, for five years).

Interrogative sentences:

Had he been playing in the hall for 1 hour?	Had she been taking care of her health since 1990?
Had it been Sleeping on the sofa for three hours?	Had I been watching T.V. for two hours?
Had we been speaking good English for two years?	Had you been telling a story for 4 hours?